

## **ROLE OF AGRICULTURAL LIBRARIES IN THE TRANSFORMATION OF AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Agricultural libraries has a lot of vital role to play in the transformation of agricultural education to enable sustainable development in Nigeria. Agriculture in Nigeria has been given prominence among the sectors of the economy. Agricultural institutions were established to cater for agricultural education. research and extension of rural agriculture. Agricultural libraries provides information services to farmers, students, livestock producers, agricultural business organizations, research workers subject specialist teachers, this is in anticipation to meet the challenge of man, food and hunger and to make for a sustainable development. Five agricultural libraries and their parent body were examined and their role in the transformation of agricultural education for sustainable development were explored, the problems limiting their sustainability such as poor funding, resistance to use of modern information technology, lack of formal training, government neglect, poor bibliographic control were explored and recommendations offered, like introduction of short term courses to educate farmers and the inclusion of modern information technology in the curriculum on database searches, information retrieval engines, retrieval software.

**KEYWORDS:** Agricultural Libraries, Transformation, Agricultural Education, Sustainable Development, Agricultural Business Organization

### **INTRODUCTION**

Nigeria a developing country with a growing population of about 100 million inhabitants. Agriculture has been given much attention since the colonial era. The cognizance given to agriculture make successive governments to establish agricultural institutions and research agricultural institutes to cater for the need of the information seekers to improve on the existing agricultural outputs. Agricultural education, research and extension are three of the vital services that an agricultural library must provide for a country's agricultural development. There is a growing consensus that food may be one of the most complex economic, political and moral issues of our time. Therefore according to Deshmkh (1980) Agricultural librarians, documentalists have a vital role to play in providing timely and relevant information services to farmers, livestock producers, agricultural business organization, research workers, subject specialist, teachers, students and others who are actively engaged in meeting the continuing challenge of man, food and hunger.

Developments in agriculture has created pressures on agricultural education, research and extension education. Agricultural libraries are libraries attached to agricultural universities, institutes or agricultural allied institutions. This has been to promote the study teaching and research in agriculture.

In Aguolu (2000) the institutions and their libraries generate and disseminate agricultural information or knowledge to agricultural extension workers, researchers, students, farmers as well as to policy makers in government.

An agricultural library being a pivotal of an agricultural institution must be developed to cater for students and staff including research workers this will go in a long way to advance the skills and effect changes in their attitudes in the desired direction. Deshmukh (1980) stated that a well equipped library run by an efficient organization is in fact the soul of an educational institution. He further stressed that faculties, however well equipped and manned by competent staff would soon find themselves in a morass of intellectual stagnation, backwardness, if those are not supported by a dynamic, modern, up to date and efficiently managed library.

Libraries all over the world are on the verge of rapid changes as a result of explosion of knowledge and literature, new subjects and advents of new ICTs etc. Agricultural institutions in Nigeria also had witness changes and they also need to improve on heir agricultural education and this can also be achieved through improved roles of agricultural libraries. The following agricultural libraries were visited by the writers of this paper to get a glimpse of the role of these libraries in agricultural education sustainable development in Nigeria.

- Forestry Research institute of Nigeria library Ibadan
- University of Nigeria library Nsukka
- University of Ibadan agricultural library Ibadan
- National Horticultural research institute library Ibadan
- International Institute of Tropical Agricultural Library Ibadan.

These agricultural libraries were used and visited because they are within the reach of the writers of this paper.

### **Role of agricultural Libraries in the Transformation of Agricultural Education and Sustainable Development**

Information professionals and librarians that are working in the agricultural institutions take active part in the education and research programme.

- They train and educate the students, researchers, and other agricultural information seekers on how to search and retrieve the required information. An experience of Kerala Agricultural University, India, Francis, Razak and Kabir (nd) noted that the syllabus for undergraduate, postgraduate and research courses contains modules such as library classification, cataloguing online and CD ROM databases, library and information technologies, information retrieval etc.
- They also make available documented sources of information that could lead to better agricultural education and sustainable development. Aina (1985) opined that agricultural information seekers in Nigeria heavily rely on documented sources stored in libraries by supplying this latter group, lie policy makers, students, agricultural extension workers, teachers and researchers agricultural documents such as books, journals, reports. Agricultural libraries provide the users coded agricultural information. This same group of information seekers as further stressed by Aina frequently get supplementary information from both verbal and non-verbal sources during meetings, workshops, conferences, formal conversations on corridors and through written correspondences exchanged though colleagues.

- For a sustainable development through agricultural libraries, there must be access to indigenous knowledge on agricultural information. Okore et al (2009) state that developing countries are endowed with a wealth of indigenous knowledge but access to such knowledge is hampered by lack of an environment that permits free flow of ideas amongst members of the community. The authors indicated that libraries should promote access to indigenous knowledge by creating an environment which permits face-to-face forum and network formation to discuss and debate on issues that might be useful to members of the community, for example the use of talk shows promoting intergenerational dialogue between the young and the old on different subject areas ranging from agriculture, ecosystem, Medicare and conflict resolution. Libraries should also use other sources of indigenous knowledge, including indigenous experts, opinion leaders and village elders, farmer to farmer interaction involving neighbours, friends or village gathering in social places. This will lead to sustainable economic and agricultural development.
- Information are being collected, organized and disseminated to increase productivity by librarians in agricultural libraries. In the light of this Williams and Muchena (1991) highlighted the importance of collecting, organizing and developing knowledge to increase productivity. They called for a developmental approach that builds on the knowledge that farmers already have and how to use that as the foundation for promoting sustainable agriculture capacity programmes. They further called on government to consider protecting indigenous knowledge through equipping information professionals with skills to identify, collect and develop indigenous knowledge into contemporary usable formats. Educators can move from the general to the specific, from the concrete to the abstract in the process of promoting sustainable agriculture.
- Information repackaging can be done through various forms to suit the targeted group. Libraries working with communities and other stakeholders encourages research, recording, recording and documentation that has practical uses in agriculture, forestry, health and sustainable development. Therefore. Bunch (1984) use the term information repackaging to mean the way an information service selects appropriate materials, reprocesses and packages the materials according to user specifications.
- The agricultural institutions are accessible to the formally educated at the exclusion of their immediate community. Their libraries provides agricultural information relating to both local and western knowledge system that could lead to sustainable development. They also facilitated debates and discussions on the role of urban agriculture in promoting economic growth, urban food security and employment creation. The facilitation of information to scholars, policy makers and farmers leads to sustainable development.
- Aina (1995) gave the roles of agriculture libraries as follows:

Collection, organization and provision of information materials in general agriculture or particular area of specialization as well as in allied subjects.

- Receiving and disseminating technical reports and information
- References, queries service, inter library loan service
- Literature search

- Current awareness services, such as distribution of accession lists, content pages of journals, selective Dissemination Information (SDI) service and
- Provision of photocopying service reference and document loan services.
- Agriculture libraries stocked documents, books, journals and reports and usually made available to information seekers either for consultation or loan. Adedigba (nd) noted that agricultural libraries offers only the conventional reference and document loan services.

Ibekwe and Lawani (1987) noted that photocopying service is available only in large university libraries and a few others. The library of international institute of tropical agriculture (IITA) offers the services mentioned and also provides agricultural information in non-paper based formats such as audio visuals, compact disk and computers.

### **Problems of Agricultural Libraries in meeting the Transformation of Agricultural Education for Sustainable Development**

It is observed and studies also revealed that agricultural libraries were poorly funded. According to Aguolu (2000) poor funding of agricultural libraries limits their acquisition of many relevant materials and that economic recession in Nigeria contributed to reduction in government grant for institutions and their libraries.

There is resistance to the application of modern technology in the dissemination of agricultural information to enhance agricultural education to the farmer that could lead to sustainable development.

Agricultural libraries tends to keep some reports confidentially and thereby denying the education of the rural information seekers and the parent community access to such vital information that can enhance agricultural education and sustainable development.

Lack of formal training in agricultural information. Personnel in agricultural libraries will have to be more specialized in technical, agricultural and closely allied sciences. This has been unsatisfactory because majority of the personnel do not have formal training to enhance agricultural education and to sustain the desired development.

According to Adimorah (1995) agricultural information users population comprises researchers, extension workers, farmers, students, agribusiness personnel, educators, bankers, industrialists, policy makers and agricultural librarians/documentalist. There is poor bibliographic control of agricultural literature especially technical reports and also lack of coherent and up to date lists (Olorunyomi 1992).

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Agriculture as a prime factor for development in an agrarian economy. The libraries in agricultural institutes are to be developed with adequate information materials, like bibliographies, abstracts, indexes, reference books, periodicals, annual reports and annual reviews that will enhance agricultural education to enable sustainable development.

The agricultural libraries must collect literature of various types concerning agricultural education and organize the library in a manner in which the desired goals will be achieved. Librarians working in agricultural libraries should be trained in the use of modern information technologies to deliver effective services, like the production of bibliographies,

indexes and sought the assistance of governing bodies and international organizations for rural agricultural co-operation.

Agricultural libraries should integrate traditional and scientific knowledge in serving the information seeking community in order to sustain the developing Nigerian economy.

Short term courses should be organized by agricultural libraries and study materials make available for farmers and students. The course curriculum should include modern application of ICTs with topics such as database search, information retrieval software, formulation of search strategies, sorting, printing and downloading of records.

## CONCLUSIONS

Agricultural libraries play a vital role in sustaining the development of nation building and agricultural education, research extension education and to maintain communication process well-organized, well developed, modern agricultural libraries should be put in place.

In service training on documentation for library staff should be a priority this will bring about efficient and effective library and information service delivery.

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